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Issues Concerning Cypriot Ascension to the European Union

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Abstract

Cyprus is preparing to enter into negotiations with the European Union for accession. If the latter does not pose major problems on the economic level, it is different from the political field. Indeed, the de facto partition, which reflects the very unsatisfactory development of inter-community negotiations at the United Nations, constitutes a major obstacle. It also seems difficult to separate the question of this accession from that of Turkey. A Turkey that is not a member of either the EU or the WEU could feel isolated in the region vis-à-vis Europe if Cyprus joins the EU.

Associated with the European Community since 1972 and having concluded with a customs union agreement in 1987, Cyprus is preparing to enter into negotiations with the European Union, presumably from 1997 onwards. If the latter does not pose major problems on the economic level, it is different from the political field. Indeed, the intercommunal talks under the aegis of the UN, which have continued for more than thirty years, have stalled. The most delicate issue that Cypriot and European negotiators will encounter during the talks is undoubtedly the *de facto* partition prevailing on the island.

Despite a difficult political situation, Cyprus has managed to establish close relations with the European Community. Talks between the two partners began in March 1971 and, about two years later, in December 1972, an Association Agreement was signed. Concluded in accordance with Article 238 of the Treaty of Rome and entered into force on 1 June 1973, it established the Permanent Association of Cyprus to the EEC. At the end of the first ten years of association, it provided for the conclusion of a customs union.

The crisis of the summer of 1974 actually occurred during the early stages of this integration process. The EEC's political cooperation has been active almost since the beginning of the Cypriot crisis and at times has played a significant role. This is one of the rare occasions when the Member States of the Community have tried to use their mechanisms of cooperation to intervene collectively in the immediate vicissitudes of a political crisis. During the second half of 1974, France held the Presidency of the Communities. It was at the initiative of French Foreign Minister Jean Sauvagnargues that the EC tried to coordinate their action to intervene in the Cypriot crisis. As early as 16 July, in the aftermath of Nicos Sampson's coup against Archbishop Makarios, at the instigation of the junta of the Athens colonels, consultations were under way and a statement was issued expressing EEC concern about the situation in

the Eastern Mediterranean and their commitment to the territorial integrity and independence of Cyprus. The European Foreign Ministers, meeting in Brussels on 22 July for a regular session of the Council of the EEC, decided, for the first time, to hold a political co-operation meeting on the margins of the Council. The communiqué issued after the meeting contained a clear call for a cease-fire, collaboration with United Nations forces, the restoration of constitutional order.

After the *de facto* partition of the island, the leaders of the EEC and then of the EU have repeatedly reiterated the fact that 'the status quo is considered unacceptable' and that 'the Union continues to support the efforts made by the Secretary-General of the United Nations aimed at a just, balanced and lasting problem and finally the Union also remains firm on the fact that such a solution must respect the sovereignty of the independence, territorial integrity and unity of the country'.

The long crisis on the island has not prevented the continuation of negotiations between the EEC and Cyprus. On 19 October 1987 in Luxembourg, the European Commission and the government led by Spyros Kyprianou signed a protocol aimed at establishing a customs union between the EEC States and the Republic of Cyprus. Under this agreement, customs duties must be abolished after two transitional periods, one of five years, the other of ten years. Thus, Cyprus became at that time the only third country bound by a customs union agreement to the Community (Kirrane, 1990 April).

Admittedly, integration into the Community was not unanimous: the Progressive Party of the Working People of Cyprus (AKEL), the powerful Cypriot Communist Party on which President Vassiliou relied, opposed it for ideological reasons. For the Greek Cypriot Communists, the economic, social and political objectives set by the Community are determined by its class essence; the clauses do not provide any real protection for Cypriot industry; finally, since the majority of the UNECE states are also NATO members, the island's adherence to a military and political bloc would be in radical contradiction to its position of non-alignment.

However, the Customs Union Agreement was concluded and the objectives of the Greek Cypriot Government were clear: it was to consolidate the share of agricultural exports on the European market and to benefit, as far as possible, from investments, technologies and European subsidies to allow the Cypriot industry to restructure. In addition to the economic benefits, the Customs Union also offers undeniable political advantages and reinforces the position of the Greek Cypriot government *vis-à-vis* Turkey. Often aligned with Athens, the Government of Nicosia sometimes made excessive demands, such as the exclusion of Turkey from the Council of Europe.

The Customs Union has worked quite well. Nicosia's application for membership of the EC was made on 3 July 1990. In its opinion of 30 June 1993 on Cyprus's application for membership, the Commission is 'convinced that a positive message must be sent to the authorities' and to the Cypriot people confirming that the Community regards Cyprus as eligible for accession and that as soon as the prospects for a settlement are more secure, the Community stands ready to engage with Cyprus in the process that will eventually lead to such accession'. However, the same opinion taking into account the fact that a regulation might not intervene in the foreseeable future suggested that it would be appropriate to re-evaluate the situation by appreciating the positions expressed by each party in these discussions and to

reconsider the question of the accession of Cyprus to the Community. It is also to facilitate this that the Community Council appointed, in February 1994, the Community observer in the negotiations within the framework of the United Nations, Serge Abou. Federico di Roberto, Italy's ambassador to Moscow, took over in January 1996 as the EU's 'representative' for the Cypriot question, not a 'coordinator', a statute for which Turkish diplomacy appears to have issued reserves. The disadvantage for the European Union is to be able to follow up the dossier from one Presidency to another.

In March 1995, Greece vetoed the signing of a customs union agreement between the EU and Turkey in return for the condition of the opening of negotiations between Brussels and Nicosia for the accession of the island. The resumption of the Cypriot dossier is scheduled for the end of the Intergovernmental Conference (which opened in Turin on 29 March 1996); six months after the end of the work, it will indeed be the beginning of the negotiations. At the General Affairs Council of 20-21 November 1995, the first meeting between the Foreign Ministers of the European Union and Cyprus took place in the framework of the 'Structured Dialogue' decided by the EU on 12 June 1995, with a view to preparing for the accession of this country, as well as the countries of Central and Eastern Europe and Malta. The modalities of this dialogue have been agreed upon and will be as follows: annual meeting on the sidelines of a European Council of Heads of State and Government; semi-annual meetings of Foreign Ministers to deal with issues of common interest and in particular foreign policy issues and membership issues; semi-annual meetings of the Ministers of Justice and the Interior; meetings between the Committee of Permanent Representatives and the 'K4' (Home Affairs - Justice); regular meetings at ministerial level on sectoral topics.

For the second half of 1995 and the first half of 1996, the Spanish and Italian Presidencies considered that such meetings could cover the following topics: environment, transport, trade issues, tourism, education, research and the internal market, economic and financial issues. On the other hand, at the Association Council on 17 July 1995, the Foreign Ministers also decided that the political dialogue already existing between Cyprus and the EU on issues would be enlarged to include, in addition meetings at the highest level and at the ministerial level, the following meetings and actions: biannual meetings of the political directors; meetings of experts on issues such as human rights, disarmament, OSCE, planning, terrorism, the United Nations, etc. ; possible alignment of Cyprus with EU declarations; the possible association of this country with the EU's actions and with the implementation of joint actions; cooperation in organisations and during international conferences, on an ad hoc basis; the appointment of a Cypriot Associated European Correspondent; regular contacts between the EU and the diplomatic missions of Cyprus in third countries.

Economically, especially if we limit ourselves to the south of the island, integration is no problem except that some observers see a phenomenon of 'criminalisation of the economy': the island has become the main financial centre and the first offshore centre of the Eastern Mediterranean. Attracted by very favourable tax conditions, nearly 6,000 offshore companies are based in Cyprus. The per capita GNP would be almost double that of Greece and Portugal, four times that of Turkey and roughly that of Italy.

However, there is some deterioration in Nicosia's trade balance with the EU, but the situation is not worrying because this deficit is largely offset by tourism receipts, mostly of European origin. However,

Cyprus's industrial exports have tended to stagnate in recent years, and the question then arises of exploring ways to better diversify and improve the competitiveness of the Cypriot industrial base and attract more foreign investment to the island. Cyprus would be one of the good users of the European Community Investment Partner (Ecip) facility, the effect to be pursued in this direction, and the commitments that the European Investment Bank (EIB) should make under the next Financial Protocol are likely to improve the overall competitiveness of the Cypriot economy.

The European Parliament, mobilised by the issue, adopted, on July 12, 1995, the report of MEP Jean Willem Bertens (Liberal Group) on Cyprus's application for membership of the EU. The report stresses that the Cypriot economy can fully cope with the problems and obligations resulting from the adoption of the *acquis communautaire*, including in the event of participation in the third stage of economic and monetary union.

On the economic level, the problem is that of the big gap that exists between North and South, in favour of the latter. The GNP per capita, which today is in the order of \$12,000 in the South, would be close to \$3,000 in the North. The economy of the North is closely linked to that of Turkey, from which it receives financial assistance and imports 40% of its products.

Industry provides 10% of employment. Inflation, another product imported from the 'mother country', is approaching 60% per year and, like Turkey's economy, the public sector deficit is large, international isolation, the maritime embargo, legal uncertainties, the ambiguity of the status of the TRNC, doubts about the property value of land owned by Greek Cypriots, the disproportion of the civil service inflates the tertiary sector but in an artificial way - two-thirds of the active population belong to the civil service -, the administrative heaviness and inefficiencies, are all data to explain the stagnation of a partition economy.

On the other hand, some dark spots persist in the Cypriot economy, particularly in the South. The parallel economy is flourishing. Offshore companies (sometimes a single domicile) take advantage of the situation of 'tax haven' that the island constitutes. The latter also has the bad reputation of being a hub for the trafficking of weapons, drugs, currency, or even objects of art. In the absence of a remunerative local market, the drug trade would be in transit (Turkey and the Middle East, especially Lebanon) or by promoting small local production (especially, it seems, in the North where there would also be processing laboratories), despite the struggle of the DEA (Drug Enforcement Agency) which maintains in Nicosia one of its most important representations. Arms smuggling, which has flourished again with the Gulf War, would serve mainly to supply Iran and the Palestinians of Lebanon. The Russian, Ukrainian and Serbian mafias seem well established and have used Serbian state or parastatal money to circumvent the embargo on Serbia. The nationals of this last country as well as those of Russia, Roumania and Bulgaria (frequent air links between Sofia and Larnaca) feel at home on the island, because it is an 'orthodox land'.

Among the political obstacles to membership, one is most important and unavoidable: the *de facto* partition that reflects the very unsatisfactory development of inter-community negotiations at the UN. The 1959 agreements between Great Britain, Greece and Turkey - and the representatives of the two

Cypriot communities - which sealed the island's independence from the British coloniser were, for the parties involved, more a *modus vivendi* than a definitive or even lasting solution. The fragility of the institutional edifice was obvious in 1963, with Mgr Makarios' attempts to amend the Constitution and the ensuing inter-community conflagration.

The island was also increasingly becoming an issue of internal politics and international politics for Turkey and for Greece, an issue on which a politician as formidable and skillful as Archbishop Makarios began to gradually lose his grip. Ankara was reluctant to see its margin of action limited by a Hellenised island, located on its main southern defense line. Athens, for whom Cyprus was an object of covetousness, had never given up the ultimate goal of securing its attachment. The slow evolution of the Cyprus crisis to its peak of summer 1974 has demonstrated now that even without considering its own conflict dynamics, Cyprus became alternately a site for the crystallisation, detonator and hostage to the Greek - Turkish dispute and sometimes all three at once.

Recent changes in the Greek and Turkish political scenes are not likely to fundamentally change the situation. The replacement in January 1996 of Andreas Papandreou by Costas Simitis, a politician of modernist conviction, has given rise in the West to optimistic comments, probably justified in terms of the economy and domestic politics. However, the appointment as Foreign Minister of Theodore Pangalos, a particularly aggressive political figure on his positions in European, Balkan and especially Turkish affairs, suggests that there would be neither a change of course nor even an easing of Athens' attitude in these areas, perhaps quite the contrary.

In Turkey, the joint declaration of Süleyman Demirel and Rauf Denktas, made public on 28 December 1995 in Ankara, aimed precisely at moving the platform of dialogue from that of Europe, of which Turkish Turks and Cypriots think wrongly that it would be in any way unfavourable to them, to that of the United Nations which they know that they would have the support of Washington. Mûmtaz Soysal, former foreign minister and special advisor to Rauf Denktas, did not hesitate to describe this statement as an international agreement.

Moreover, it is clear that the legal dimension, i.e. the compatibility of the question of EU accession with the Constitution of Cyprus, is increasingly obscured. Indeed, the latter authorises the accession to an international body, the signing of an international treaty involving both parties, only with the agreement of the guarantor powers, that is to say among others Greece and Turkey. From this point of view, a unilateral accession risks being considered as a coup even to the Constitution that the Cypriots have so far scrupulously respected.

Regarding the demilitarisation of the island, which will inevitably be on the agenda, the problems are relatively numerous. In the first place arises the question of the presence of Turkish troops on the island. 30,000 Turkish soldiers and officers are stationed there. These numbers may even increase, in response to the 'over-armament' of Greek Cypriot military forces. It would be unrealistic to expect a departure of the Turkish military forces without a political settlement that satisfies Turkey and the Turkish Cypriots, nor to make it a prerequisite for any solution, given the mistrust that prevails between the two communities and the minority position of Turkish Cypriots.

Another sensitive issue that will arise is undoubtedly the presence of two British 'sovereign bases' (Sovereign Base Areas) installed under the agreements of London and Zurich (1959, 1960) and which the Nicosia government has no control over. These bases (Dhekelia, between Famagusta and Larnaca, and Akrotiri, in the south of the island), among the most important that Britain possesses overseas, have a great strategic value for her and, under certain conditions or indirectly, for its NATO allies. They cover an area of 99 km², or 2.9% of the total area of the island. The Episkopi listening station, north of Akrotiri, captures diplomatic and military messages exchanged in the Middle East and works in close contact with GCHQ. In addition, the Americans and British have a radar station at the top of the island (Mount Troodos)'probably the best in the world', as well as various other facilities, including a helidrome located in the 'border area'. It is not certain that London is easily giving up the privileges - military as well as pleasure - which it enjoys on the island, especially since neither the Greek Cypriots nor the Turkish Cypriots on the one hand, nor the Greeks nor the Turks, on the other hand, do not question energetically the presence of these bases, for fear of attracting the formidable hostility of the British. Finally, the armaments (provided in particular by France and lately by Russia) of the National Guard (Greek Cypriot), with the support, of course, of Greece (according to 'the doctrine of common defense', agreement concluded between Athens and Nicosia in 1994), is often denounced in the Turkish press; it is perceived as a threat by the North and refers to the question of the presence of Turkish troops.

The question of the integration of the island to the European Union also gives the measure of the international interweaving of the Cypriot case. The aim is to promote a new framework that would undoubtedly change in favour of the Greek Cypriots regional center of gravity. The ongoing Balkan wars and crises add a dimension to the island's involvement in regional affairs, this time through Greece.

A certain consensus prevails today in Nicosia between the political forces that hope to resolve the dispute in the sense of 'reunification' through accession. At most one can see a very slight decline of G. Clerides' Democratic Rally which is more focused on internal issues. The Democratic Party of S. Kyprianou, even the AKEL (almost 30% of the vote) of Mr Christophias, are in favour of membership, supported by the business community and the 'economic lobby' of G. Vassiliou, former president.

On the other hand, we can see the opposition, under the current conditions, of the 'Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus' of Rauf Denktas. The latter, supported among others by the Anatolians settled in the North and who are about 60 000, dominates the Turkish Cypriot political scene. The implementation of the customs union agreement with the Greek Cypriots has always worried the leaders of the Turkish Cypriot community. 'What the EEC should freeze is the implementation of the customs union agreement with the Greek Cypriots; because this text threatens us directly' declared Rauf Denktas. The other Turkish Cypriot political forces, whether they oppose the Anatolian colonisation, such as the Socialist Liberation Party, or want to be close to the Communists, such as the Republican Turkish Party, are in the minority.

Greece supports Cyprus' application for membership of the EU, at the risk of irritating Turkey. On the other hand, one can suspect it, the latter is hostile under the current conditions. Within the EU, there may be some different opinions, some reluctance (Great Britain, the Netherlands, Denmark), but it is

generally nuances. It is certain, however, that this question will be relatively difficult to manage because of the multiplicity of speakers, and even, in the case of the United Kingdom, differences of interest.

The joint accession of Turkey and Cyprus, let alone the accession of Turkey alone, seems very unlikely in the short term, even though the Ankara Declaration of 28 December 1995 states that the adhesions of Turkey and Cyprus must take place at the same time. There remains the hypothesis of the accession of Cyprus alone.

In its opinion on Cyprus's application for membership, the Commission had taken into account that a regulation might not be adopted 'in the foreseeable future' and that, in that case, it would be necessary to take into account positions expressed by each party in the discussions. It thus leaves the door open for Cyprus's accession even in the event of non-settlement of the problem, taking into account the fact that many decision-makers are reluctant to consider this hypothesis. Alecos Michaelides, the Cypriot Minister for Foreign Affairs, was nevertheless clear: 'In this case, we will have to proceed with the accession by accepting the German scenario', while affirming that, if there is a solution later, the rest of the island will join us automatically. But the situation in Cyprus differs totally from that of divided Germany'.

In Cyprus, the South does not pursue a policy in this perspective. The idea here is simpler: it must first be unification and cohabitation will be done by itself. However, as the deadly incidents of recent months point out, this is a project that obscures history until 1974. To return to the question of membership, nothing would be, of course, more damaging to the image of the EU and the relations between it and Turkey than to see its border separated by the Nicosia Wall, a solution that is inconceivable by European observers and actors.

One should first ask, whether the waiting attitude of the Fifteen (minus one, that is to say Greece) will remain firmly in the long run and, secondly, what will be the effects not only of the accession but also of the engagement of the accession negotiations on the UN process, on relations between the EU and Turkey, on the relations between the two communities in the island and the consequences for the evolution of the negotiations in the framework of the United Nations.

It is well known that the Security Council entrusted the Secretary-General thirty years ago with the task of finding a solution. After the crisis of 1974, the meeting of Mgr Makarios, Rauf Denktas and Kurt Waldheim in 1977 marks an important date: four negotiating principles were then accepted by the parties. They stipulated that an independent, non-aligned and bicomunal republic should be established; that territories dependent on the administration of each community should be defined in the light of productivity or economic viability, as well as the territorial possessions of each community; that issues relating to freedom of movement and establishment, property rights or other more specific problems should be considered in the context of the creation, in the short and medium terms, of a federal bicomunal system, while also taking into account some practical difficulties that the Turkish Cypriot community might sooner or later face; finally, the powers and functions of the central or federal government must, above all, be aimed at safeguarding the unity of the country, always bearing in mind the specific bi-communal character of the state.

The agreement reached on 19 May 1979 between S. Kyprianou and R. Denktas confirmed that the basis for negotiations between the two communities should be the Makarios-Denktas Agreement. More recently, in 1988, the leader of the Turkish Cypriot community and G. Vassiliou decided to rely on the agreements of 1977 and 1979, but also - for G. Vassiliou with less enthusiasm - on the proposals made by the Secretary-General in 1984. The latter consisted mainly of the following recommendations: no new approach to the internationalisation of the Cyprus problem should be undertaken; both parties were to pledge not to increase qualitatively and quantitatively military forces. In the meantime, the military forces on the island, and the Turkish Cypriot authorities were to hand over the Varosha area to the Secretary-General for the latter to place it under the authority of the United Nations administration.

On 27 November 1984, Javier Perez de Cuellar, the Secretary-General of the United Nations, also presented a preliminary draft agreement on the constitutional question: he envisaged the creation of a Council of Ministers composed of seven members from the Greek Cypriot community and three members from the Turkish Cypriot community. The Turkish Cypriot Vice-President would have a right of veto in some areas, including Foreign Affairs and Defense; it would also have the possibility to appeal to the Constitutional Court, the latter having the classic role of controlling the constitutionality of laws. Legislative power would be bicameral: a lower house, made up of 70% by Greek Cypriots and 30% by Turkish Cypriots; in the upper house, the two communities should be represented on an equal footing.

The situation can be summed up by recalling that the Turkish Cypriots are calling for a bicomunal federal republic but insist on its bizonal dimension, the updating of the treaties that guarantee an alliance of 1960 and refer to 'federated states' instead of 'provinces', a term preferred by Greek Cypriots. The latter call for an immediate withdrawal of Turkish troops from Cyprus and the return of Greek Cypriot communities under the control of the Greek Cypriot administration, while the Turkish Cypriots stress the need for territorial adjustment in the light of economic viability. Finally, there is the question of international guarantees to ensure the security of the island; the Greeks do not want to hear about the Turkish 'right of inspection'; the Turks would hardly resign themselves to the fact that Cyprus falls under the EU and the WEU, from which they are excluded and where they have no real voice.

It is difficult, once again, to consider the accession of the entire island without consensus on these fundamental points of the dispute, even without explicit agreement. On the other hand, it being understood that it cannot be relinquished from United Nations inter-communal negotiations, even though the latter, in this case as in others, is having trouble transforming its peacekeeping action, it will be necessary to ensure necessary coordination between the UN and European integration processes.

When Greece's accession to the European Community was discussed, the Commission of the European Communities, in an opinion made public on 27 January 1976, stated bluntly: 'the Community is not and should not become a party in the disagreements between Greece and Turkey. So far, the balance of the Community's relations with Greece and Turkey has resulted in the identical status of partners from which they benefit, each of which has the possibility of accession as an end goal, again only with different calendars. The perspective of Greece's accession inevitably introduces a new element in this balance. The Commission considers that specific measures will be needed to ensure that the examination of the application for membership does not affect the relations between the Community

and Turkey, and that the rights guaranteed by the Association between the EEC and Turkey [are not] modified'.

However, what has happened since these warnings and concerns were expressed confirms that the Cyprus question was, in particular because of Athens' internationalisation policy, one of the main obstacles to improving Turkish-Community relations. The meeting of the Association Council between the European Community and Turkey was adjourned *sine die*, on 25 April 1988, in Luxembourg, following a dispute on the Cyprus question. From the opening of the meeting, the Turkish delegation refused to sit with the Foreign Ministers of the EEC in protest against the decision of the Twelve to discuss the Cyprus problem between Athens and Ankara. UNECE chiefs of diplomacy had decided to address the Cyprus issue on the insistent request of Greece as a condition of its participation in the meeting. The Greeks had insisted that the 'common position', to be presented to the Turks, included a reference to the negative effect of the presence of Turkish troops in northern Cyprus on the functioning of the association. The German presidency, then the whole Council, had finally been bowed - wrongly, later recognised in circles close to the European Council. But the fact is that, in a joint declaration, the Twelve stressed that the Cyprus problem was likely to have repercussions on relations between the Community and Turkey. The Turkish delegation, for its part, considered that this problem is a matter of its bilateral relations with Athens, and should not interfere in its cooperation with the EEC.

Too many problems separate Turkey from the Union, because it is the state most formerly associated with the EU and to which the latter has a moral obligation. We cannot discuss here in detail these various points which affect the socioeconomic level of Turkey, its democratic deficit, its demographic weight, etc. However, one cannot legitimately lose sight of the cultural dimension which is partly unspoken and which makes many Turks think that the behaviour of the EU resembles that of a 'Christian club'. The question of the accession of Cyprus risks exacerbating the debate.

The opinion of the Commission stresses that 'the chances of being reducing the development gap between the northern and southern isle would be enhanced through integration and that the leaders of the Turkish Cypriot community, even if they oppose the conditions under which the application for membership was made, do not underestimate the economic and social benefits that European integration would bring to their community'.

Today, however, the north of the island suffers from great isolation, not to mention a blockade. Of course, no official relationship exists between the European Union and the 'Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus' whose proclamation has not been recognised by any European state. However, liaison offices of the RTNC exist in several European capitals as in London, the nationals of several European states go to the North - it is true via Turkey and at the risk of not being able to enter the South and some European companies have settled in the North, especially in the free zone of Famagusta.

It is certain that the start of the accession negotiations will put the Greek Cypriots in an even stronger position. The grant of economic aid and subsidies in Nicosia - which will decide the distribution - the multiplication of visits of politicians (like Patrick Devedjian, particularly active and supportive of Franco

Cyprus friendship) and their shocking statements against the nearby Turkey risk crippling Turkish Cypriots and increasing their already strong mistrust.

There is sometimes a tendency to forget the origins of the Cypriot crisis that had reached its climax on July 15, 1974: a *coup d'etat*, led by the Cypriot National Guard - supervised by Greek officers as President Makarios had requested the help of the authorities in Athens - had delivered the *coup de grace* to the constitutional order on the island and threatened the existence of the Turkish Cypriot community without any real protection. Without taking the unconditional defense of the intervention of the Turkish army, it must be acknowledged that it has at least served to avoid, despite the deplorable and unavoidable victims of the violent clashes that lasted a few days, the bloodshed that ravaged in the Balkans and Transcaucasia. It has also served to discard Enosis, that is to say myth of the island's attachment to what part of the Greek Cypriot population considers the motherland, even though this myth has not completely faded away.

Moreover, it is neither possible nor healthy to completely dissociate the Turkish Cypriot community of Cyprus from the Turkish population of Turkey, to disregard the other disputes that divide the two countries bordering the Aegean Sea (delimitation of the continental shelf and territorial waters, sharing of airspace, remilitarisation of some Greek islands, etc.), or even more generally of the competition and the struggle of influences that Ankara and Athens lead in this region of Europe. The Cypriot imbroglio will find a lasting solution only if there is a rapprochement, even an agreement, between the two 'enemy brothers' of NATO.

It is only in this context that Cyprus's candidacy for EU membership could make sense. This accession, which can hardly be dissociated from that of Turkey, seems possible at least economically, while the accession of the latter seems to pose several problems that are unlikely to be solved in the near future. Some people will find disproportionate the echoes, in Turkey, aroused by the assent of the European Parliament of the customs union agreement which entered into force on 1 January 1996; but they show once again, if need be, the enormous impact that relations with Europe have in this country, and the aspirations of an entire population and the political class they reveal and signify. The customs union is not membership. A Turkey that is neither a member of the EU nor the WEU could feel isolated in the region *vis-à-vis* Europe if Cyprus joins the EU, given the fact that this will inevitably serve Hellenism, seen also as the policy of 'maximisation of resources' that leads Athens exploiting thoroughly the bad image of Turkey, including its democratic deficit. It remains to be seen whether the start of negotiations will help to mitigate the anchoring of disputes in the Aegean and Cyprus. It is permissible to have the greatest circumspection on this subject.

Should we conclude that after the Greek accession political cooperation will have to give up taking a stand in the Cypriot affair? It would be in many respects unfortunate, but Greek diplomacy should be extremely restrained in order to avoid this possibility. The only change that has since occurred is the name of 'political cooperation' which has become 'structured dialogue'. It can also be seen that the Cyprus issue occupies, as demonstrated in particular by the European Parliament's recent positions in relations between the European Union and Turkey, a growing role to the detriment of the latter, therefore, a certain distance from the principles laid down by the European Community in the 1970s.

On the island itself, it is probable, as the Commission believes, that the Turkish Cypriot community derives a benefit from membership and that the gap between the two communities tends to be closer provided they are vigilant and take the necessary measures not to create new. One of the questions seems to be the conciliation of two imperatives in Cyprus: free circulation in the medium or long term and the protection of the Turkish Cypriot community, which has long been excluded from the economic circuits. It is true, on the other hand, that time is running out and hopes for a federal solution are dwindling in this conflict.

A trend now emerging in Turkey, an indispensable partner in many respects for the EU, is the questioning - belated by some observers - of certain clauses of the union agreement, signed on 6 March 1995 between the EU and Ankara, clauses which relate specifically to Cyprus. The Turkish authorities are putting more emphasis on the trust they have in the UN negotiations. They also tend to believe that European politics (or the absence of politics) has implied, in the south-east of the continent, a complacency towards Athens. The Bosnian and Macedonian issues were done under the auspices of the United States. One might fear that the Turkish leaders - and with them those of the TRNC - are turning again, as they have practically always done since 1946, to the White House where they feel they find more understanding.

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